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ANNEX (A)

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ESTIMATE OF WORLD REACTIONS TO  
KOREAN CEASE-FIRE DEVELOPMENTS

AN INTELLIGENCE ESTIMATE  
Prepared by  
The Estimate Group  
Office of Intelligence Research

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AUGUST 22, 1951

THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

To estimate the extent of free world acceptance of the Communist propaganda line in the event (a) of a breakdown of the Korean cease-fire talks or (b) of a prolongation of the talks.

DISCUSSION

An examination of official and unofficial expressions of opinion in the non-Communist world since the beginning of the cease fire discussions in Korea reveals a progressive falling off in world interest in the Kaesong talks from the high point reached immediately after Malik's statement of June 23.

This is understandable enough. After the initial round of excitement at the prospect for an end to the Korean war, governments and peoples alike turned quickly to the consideration of issues and problems on the various local scenes. In some countries where press and governmental comment on international affairs normally comes in volume--India, for example--preoccupation with nearer issues has cut drastically into the amount of newspaper and official time devoted to the question of peace in Korea. Even where no unusually dramatic local events have supervened, the passage of time, the somewhat technical nature of the cease-fire talks, and the prolonged bargaining character they have now acquired, have together dulled public and, apparently, official concern with events in Korea. Nowhere in the non-Communist world, certainly, does there seem to be any present and general disposition to view the Korean negotiations as a possible prelude to Armageddon. On the contrary, the prevailing attitude in the free world has settled down for the time being to something not very far from indifference.

This very lack of interest undoubtedly has been a factor blunting the edge of the Communist propaganda campaign. For all the effort of Communist organs and Communist "peace" organizers, the party line on Korea appears to have been smothered, for the most part, by the apathy or preoccupation of the groups to whom the Communist appeal has been directed. It is possible only to speculate about other explanations for the failure of the Communist propagandists to obtain a favorable response to their claim that US imperialism alone stands in the way of a peaceful settlement in Korea. In some degree, it seems likely that the demonstration of US readiness to discuss peace and that US leadership had every desire to limit the Korean war, coming immediately upon the spectacular evidence of the MacArthur incident, has had a favorable effect on many groups previously ready to believe the worst about US intentions. Beyond this, there may be reason to hope that the Kremlin's cynical appeal to the nearly universal

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desire for peace is now beginning to be received with a matching cynicism of the free world toward Kremlin protestations. At all event, the Communist version of the specific issues raised at Kaesong seems to have gained very little currency; it is almost as though the world looked on the detailed issues as being largely irrelevant to the major point: that is, whether or not the Communist world now wishes peace in Korea.

If these reasons for the Communist propaganda failure are broadly correct, then a prolongation of the Kaesong talks is not alone likely to make the free world any more receptive to the Communist appeal. The Communist propaganda line, in the event of continuing negotiations, is predictable. It will continue along carrot-and-stick lines, holding out the carrot of peace while at the same time implying broadly that if the US "warmongers" refuse the carrot, then the alternative will be the stick of continuing bloodshed. At every point during the cease-fire discussions, stress will be placed on US intransigence and US unwillingness to seek realistically for peace. By way of contrast, great weight will be placed on the exclusive Communist patent on peaceful intentions. Atrocity themes, built around the alleged effects of US air action, will be emphasized. The threat that the war may be renewed on a grander scale will be subtly but persistently introduced.

Since this propaganda approach has gained little free world acceptance thus far, it is most unlikely that its appeal will be enhanced by further dragging out of the Kaesong discussions. Rather, apathy toward the Korean talks is likely to deepen as time goes on.

It must be noted, however, that the world Communist propaganda campaign would assuredly gain in popular attention from any Soviet action directly or indirectly related to the Korean negotiations. A startling conciliatory move--say, a Soviet signature to the Japanese peace treaty or, equally, an overt warlike act in Korea or elsewhere--would necessarily give new life to the Communist peace or war campaign, either raising world hopes or arousing latent fears.

A breakdown of the Kaesong talks would alter the Communist propaganda campaign only in minor detail. There would be a major effort to pin-point US responsibility for the failure of negotiations, chiefly by seizing upon the simplest and most dramatic issues--most probably the location of the cease-fire line and the buffer zone but perhaps repeated "violation" of the neutral zone--and asserting and reasserting that it was US stubbornness and bad faith in rejecting the 38th parallel (after indicating an intention to accept it) that had dashed the world's hope for peace. Otherwise, the main lines of Communist propaganda would remain unchanged except, perhaps that even greater emphasis would be given to the war motif.

There is little doubt that the fact of a breakdown of the Korean negotiations would alarm most of the free world. In some areas, notably the Philippines, Turkey, and most of Latin America, where public and official opinion is conditioned to a belief in the unchangeable malevolence of the Soviet world, alarm would be mixed with an I-told-you-so reaction. Western European opinion would be apprehensive at the prospect that the US would adopt the elements of the MacArthur program and thus bring World War III a long step nearer. In most of Asia and the Near East, fear of an approaching World War III would be heightened and some credence would be given to the Communist argument that US unwillingness to compromise was to blame for the ending of negotiations.

In practical terms, the direct and immediate consequence of a breakdown of the talks at Kaesong would be limited. None of the states now contributing personnel to the Korean war would substantially increase its contribution; the nations that have thus far refused to take an active part in the UN action would continue to refuse. The group of states tending most strongly to neutralism--India and its followers in Asia and the Near East--would become

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hardened in their neutralist tendencies; many of the nations in this group would look upon events in Korea as confirmation of their view that the UN is an inadequate instrument for peace. Pressure from this group for a big power conference would increase. The pace of rearmament in Western Europe would not slacken but neither would it be likely to accelerate. The UK and the English speaking members of the British Commonwealth would draw nearer to the US point of view on Far Eastern policies as regards China and Japan. Japan, if its hopes for a peace treaty had been realized, would be spurred to build its military forces rapidly, unless, that is, a Soviet-Chinese attack appeared to be an imminent possibility. Over-all, the present military and political lineup in the world would remain for the short period unchanged.

However, the relationship of developments at Kaesong to the pending Japanese peace treaty conference at San Francisco is indeterminate and might be significant. If talks at Kaesong are continuing when the San Francisco conference is convened, the Kremlin may (a) condition agreement to a Korean armistice on Western acceptance of Soviet proposals regarding Japan; (b) soften Communist terms at Kaesong in order to obtain an agreement and thus to create in dramatic fashion an atmosphere favorable to a general discussion, on Soviet terms, of outstanding Far Eastern issues; or (c) raise the prospect that both the Korean and Japanese impasses could be broken by a big power conference covering all Far Eastern issues. Any one of these tactics might well find a responsible attitude in India, Burma, and Indonesia, among the signatory nations, and in Iran and the Arab Near East as well. A breakdown of the Kaesong talks prior to the conference would give the Soviets the club of a threatened and imminent extension of the Korean war. Once again, the response, so far as signatories to the peace treaty are concerned, would be limited mainly to the three Asian nations, India, Burma, and Indonesia. These countries at least would be likely to be disposed to endorse Soviet proposals for big power negotiations covering the entire range of Far Eastern issues and, more than likely, would refrain, from signing the US draft of a Japanese peace treaty.

CONCLUSIONS

1. The Communist propaganda campaign, built upon the Kaesong talks, has thus far met with indifference and skepticism throughout the free world.

2. Prolongation of the discussions at Kaesong would be likely to increase non-Communist indifference and skepticism toward the Communist appeal.

3. A breakdown of the Kaesong talks would give rise to alarm in most of Asia and Western Europe. Communist propaganda, which would attempt to put the entire onus of the failure of negotiations on US intransigence, would find some acceptance in South and Southeast Asia and the Near East. Neutralist tendencies in these areas would become more confirmed. No significant change would occur as regards troop contributions to Korea or Western European rearmament.

4. So far as the Japanese peace treaty conference is concerned, developments in Kaesong are likely to have a significant effect only upon India, Burma, and Indonesia, states whose attitudes toward signing the treaty are already in doubt.

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